

# Mat Cutting Techniques: Offset Corners and V-Grooves

by William Parrie, CPF



Photo 1

## Creating an Offset Corner Mat

1) For this example, I will cut the mat with a 3" border all around. First, set your mat guide at 3" and mark the back of the mat all the way around with pencil. (See the long marks in Photo 1.) Next, move your mat guide out just a  $\frac{1}{4}$ " up to  $3\frac{1}{4}$ ". Then make short marks in each corner all the way around. The back of your matboard should look like the example in Photo 2.

2) Next, with your mat *face down*, you will cut the corners with what is called a skip cut. Rather than cutting the full opening along the long pencil marks, first cut the 1" or so marked by pencil at each corner. This will enable you to use the fallout if you want to do a double mat with an offset corner.

3) After you've cut all four corners with skip cuts, move your mat guide back down to 3". Now cut along all four long lines, with the mat still face down. Do not cross where the pencil marks intersect; stop at the intersections.

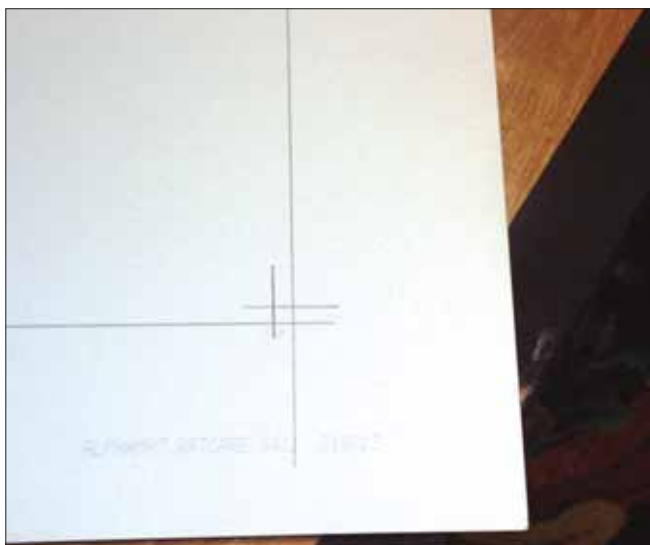


Photo 2



Photo 3



Photo 4

4) You can also make a double, offset corner mat as seen in Photo 5. To do this, take another piece of matboard (the one that will show as your inner mat) and cut approximately  $\frac{1}{2}$ " off on two adjacent sides.

5) Attach that newly cut piece to the back of your existing offset corner mat with double-sided ATG tape. Now, you will set your mat guides to  $3\frac{1}{4}$ " and mark the back mat all the way around. Then move your mat guide out to  $3\frac{1}{2}$ " and mark the short sides like you have done for the first mat.

6) Proceed to cut exactly the same as you have for the first mat, cutting with skip cuts. Then move the mat guide back down to  $3\frac{1}{4}$ " and cut on the long lines like you did for the first mat. Remove the fallout and you will have the finished product.

*Note:* I recommend that you use good quality matboard for these types of cuts. It greatly influences the outcome and you get crisper cuts.

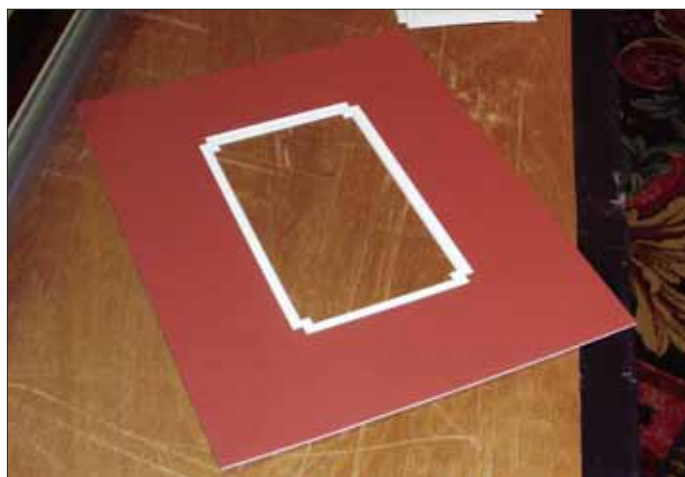


Photo 5

## Creating V-Grooves

1) Cutting a v-groove demands that you turn the matboard around a number of times. You can lose track of which side last went under the cutter, so I put an orientation line with a pencil before I begin (see Photo 6).

2) First, set your mat guide at  $2\frac{1}{2}$ " and mark your intended cuts on the mat all the way around with pencil lines. For this step, you will be cutting a single mat with  $2\frac{1}{2}$ " borders (see Photo 7).

3) After you cut the mat, set your mat cutter to its v-groove position (setting). There are different methods for different cutters, so check your manufacturer's instructions for this.

4) Take the fallout of the single mat you've just cut and put it *face up* in your mat cutter and slowly cut a small bit off all four edges of the fallout. It will look like Photo 8.



Photo 7

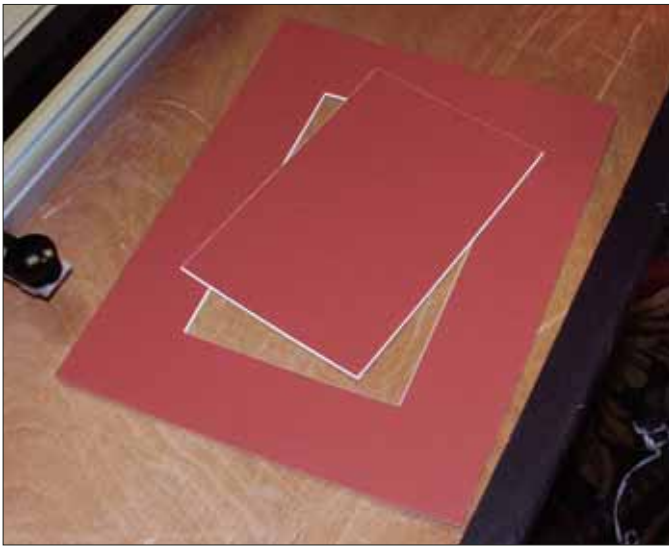


Photo 8



Photo 9

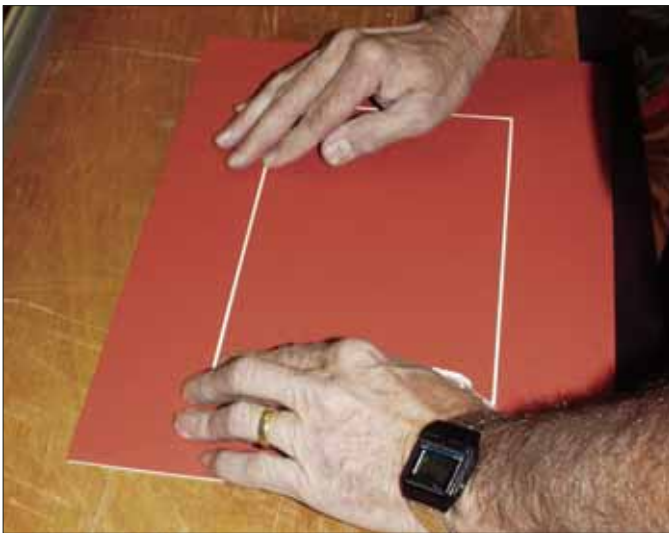


Photo 10



Photo 11

5) After you've removed the edge of the fallout, take the mat and apply Scotch 810 tape, with double-sided adhesive. Apply it so that approximately  $\frac{1}{4}$ " of the tape extends into the window of the mat (see Photo 9).

6) Then from the front side you will reinsert the dropout into the mat opening. And this will form your v-groove (see Photo 10).

7) Let's spice it up and add an offset corner. Mark your mat on the back with pencil marks at 3" all the way

around. Move your mat guide out to  $3\frac{1}{4}$ ". Make your short lines in the corners for the offset.

8) Do your short cuts with the skip cuts. Now, move your guide back to 3" and do our long cuts—inside line to inside line (see Photo 11).

*Note:* Experiment with different colored and textured mats to create v-grooves. Many think this design only looks good in dark mats. I think they look fantastic in white and off-white; it can be a very subtle addition to a design. ■

Bill Parrie, CPE, has spent 30 years in the industry and has been teaching since the early 1970's. He has taught custom framing for numerous suppliers in the U.S., Latin America, Middle East, and Europe. From 1989 to 1990, Bill was general manager for the Cultural Palace in Saudi Arabia, where he was responsible for organizing and developing cultural art exhibits.

